



A Tough Start after Kitty Hawk

The first year at Huffman Prairie Flying Field was filled with frustrations, short flights, and crashes. Fickle winds and the vexing puzzle of how to control the flying machine as it moved through the air limited the total time aloft to only 49 minutes.

Only forty good flying starts were made here before early September. Most early test flights lasted only seconds. In the whole 1904 flying season, Orville went up just 41 times, and Wilbur only 37.

At Kitty Hawk we had unlimited space and wind enough to make starting easy with a short track.Here we must depend on a long track and light winds...While we are getting ready, the favorable opportunities slip away, and we are usually up against a rainstorm, a dead calm, or a wind blowing at right angles to the track.

Wilbur Wright to Octave Chanute,
June 21, 1904

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Orville had flown only 432 feet off the launch track when his flying machine nosed into the ground, as shown in this August 14, 1904 photo.

To keep curious eyes from reporting their progress and problems, the Wright brothers built their 1904 hangar near the fence far ahead. It was as distant from the trolley station as the Huffman property would allow.

